

The appendice

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Political fiction about Quebec separating from Canada

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Â Â The scene is the offices of a lawyer in Beauceville, province of QuÃ©bec, Canada. On a chair facing Me Rocquebrune's massive desk, Arthur Taitu, a rich farmer, is sitting quietly, waiting for his solicitor to finish reading to him from a petition that he is expected to sign later. Taitu is a little man with a decided temperament. One look at him is enough to know that one is facing an individual of a determined disposition and that once started, any business with him will have to go his way or else. But right now, Arthur Taitu is not so sure. Why, he thinks that he is way over his head with this project that he has started at great cost and has him one Wednesday morning listening to his solicitor mumbling silly legalese to his quite incomprehensible ears.

Â Â And he doesn't like the feeling that much. The last time he was here, in this same room, was six years before when he had sued AmÃ©dÃ© Trudel over farm machinery material that had made his life miserable ever after buying the heavy-weight equipment. Then, he finds himself looking around, seeing on the walls that surround him all those pictures of Me Rocquebrune smiling at or shaking hands with local dubious celebrities. Who are these people, he asks himself, not at all impressed by the display that makes the place look like some Kiwanis president headquarters. Anyway, there is in the monotonous voice of his solicitor an air of quiet authority, the words he uses look erudite and scholarly and the fact that he can't make head nor tail out of the incoherent paragraphs reassures Arthur in the end. After all, it is the way it should be. How could these men of law win cases if they were to talk in a lingo that any Joe Blow like himself could decipher? And then, something in the lawyer's voice stopped his reverie. After more
â Whereas that Arthur had cared to count, now Me Rocquebrune is starting to make sense and then, what he gets is his client's full attention.

Â Â The story Arthur is now hearing goes this way:

Â Â September 4, 2012, the Parti QuÃ©bÃ©cois had won the Quebec elections, gaining for themselves a majority government of 70 out of 125. It had been a severe defeat for Jean Charest, premier for the last nine years and his Parti Liberal. The PLQ was left with 21 deputies in the new parliament, in third place after La Coalition pour lâ Avenir du QuÃ©bec, a new formation created by PQ renegade FranÃ§ois Legault who had managed to get 43 of his kind elected with 32% of the popular vote.

Â Â Against PQ's 38% and PLQ 20%.

Â Â For the first time in history, there was in QuÃ©bec a woman Premier. It was indeed for Pauline Marois a great personal victory even if her party had been taken over lately by radicals who had forced upon her the RIP, (RÃ©fÃ©rendum d'Initiative Populaire). Everybody knew in Quebec that the issue of the separation of Quebec from Canada wasn't that popular after two lost consultations in 1980 and 1995 and that any new one would be lost without a doubt. But those facts weren't about to deter the zealots in the party from forcing a new one on the population however divisive it could be. Hence the RIP that made it possible for 15% of the registered voters to petition their way to one new referendum. It was expected that the radicals in the PQ would not leave power without putting that issue another time in front of the people, either with Marois's full consent or without her benediction via the RIP.

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^ ^ And then, lawyer Rocquebrune's petition brings the action back in early 2013. Minister Pierre Duchesne is in his office in the Parliament house in Quebec. On his desk is a map of the province that he is now showing to his colleague Jean-François Lisée. Duchesne is a little uncomfortable. He is not sure what to expect. This idea of his, he entertained for a long time but never expressed it to anybody else for fear of the way it will be received. Because the concept he is about to expose to Lisée is quite shocking and he knows that most will see as indecent, frightful or horrendous. And still, if they want to win this thing, because, he knows. He knows that if they do what he is now going to propose, his side will win the next referendum. There can be no discussion about that. He is so much certain of the matter that it is not even open for discussion.

^ ^ The thing is self evident. You do what he proposes and the expected result will come. The word chemistry pops out in his head. CHEMISTRY!

^ ^ That's it! Chemistry! This is just chemistry, he thinks.

^ ^ Duchesne is now ready for Lisée.

- ^ You see this? He asked.

- ^ Well, yes. It is a map. What about it?

- ^ You take a good look at that little triangle there, this little piece of land with rivers on both sides and the Ontario borders at its west flank?

- ^ I think it is called the Beauharnois district. Says Lisée.

- ^ And then, you add up the western part of the Island of Montreal.

- ^ So what?

- ^ You know how many anglos live in that area.

- ^ To many.

^ ^ That gets Lisée the expected laugh.

- ^ 920,000 as a matter of fact.

^ ^ Lisée shrugs his shoulders.

- ^ Tell me something I don't know.

- ^ Plus 300,000 or so of allophones, I mean people who may speak French but use English in their day to day life.

- ^ Out of a population of how many, the total living in that zone of yours, if I may ask.

- ^ One million and a half.

- ^ So that leaves 300,000 people of our kind living there.

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- â And not many of them we can expect to answer YES to the right question, if you care to have my take on that subject.â

- â I would tend to agree with you on this one.â

- â What if?â The other stops, why, is he afraid? They are just talking after all. No harm done.

â And LisÃ©e, for his part, is interested. Duchesne can see that. There are in his eyes some sparkle of intelligent speculation. The guy is smart. Nobody, friends or foes, will dispute much or long over that issue.â And now, without being told, LisÃ©e can see by himself where this demonstration is leading. Well. How come he never up to this minute considered the notion himself? He looks at the map. Which is so big that it takes more space than Duchesne's desk provide.

â All of it, QuÃ©bec.

â And, in the lower center of it all, this small red dot, drawn with a marker, thanks to his friend's artistic skills, no bigger than one of his shirt button. A piece so small that it couldn't make any geographical difference and still, a morsel that could be the answer to their dreams of creating a country for themselves in America.

- â What if?â Duchesne repeats, and then, he sees the half smile on LisÃ©e's face and knows that he has a sell.

- â You want to get rid of the lot, isn't it?â LisÃ©e asks.

- â We lost the last one because of them.â

- â The old man had it right, isn't it?â LisÃ©e is referring to premier Jacques Parizeau in 1995 who had said, the night of the crushing defeat of the yes vote at 49.42%:

â We have been beaten by money and the ethnic vote.â

- â I would say, good riddance, don't you?â

- â How big is that area, anyway?â

- â 3000 square miles, I think. Look at it. 60 by 50 at the most. No even that much.â

- â One tiny appendix.â

- â Nicely put,â Duchesne agrees.

- â I say. It could be done.â

- â Damn right you are.â

- â It would take care easy of one million and a half NO votes, that's for sure.â

- â And except for those lousy 3000 square miles, what's left of Quebec would be French alright, not to be bothered anymore about minority rights. That would be the day, don't you think?â

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- â What about Montreal?â LisÃ©e asks at that point.
- â The west part of it starts at the boulevard St-Laurent. So, there will be EnglishÂ Montreal and French Montreal.â
- â There goes downtown Montreal.â
- â We will build ourselves a bigger one.â
- â This may be a tough sell for some.â
- â Never like the damn place, anyway.â Concluded Duchesne.

Â Â And so it was. Arthur Taitu remembered the events past that were now part of hisÂ lawyerâ s narrative. The PQ had initiated talks with Harper conservative Canadaâ sÂ government and it had been decided that if the people of the province of QuebecÂ were to agree by referendum to the partition of their territory, so be it. BothÂ governments had then voted one constitutional amendment that created oneÂ federal territory in the area known as the QuÃ©bec western peninsula which hadÂ been permitted by successful referendums held in both QuÃ©bec and the so calledÂ â appendiceâ .

Â Â Later, in 2014, there had been a new referendum where the then actualÂ population of QuÃ©bec, six and a half million inhabitants, were invited to decide ifÂ they wanted to stay in Canada or not. Those mostly French citizens had decidedÂ 61% in favour of secession. Arthur Taitu was part of the 39% of the very angryÂ French Canadians that felt betrayed and abandoned by their FederalÂ Government.

Â Â Which explained why Taitu, who was up to now a perfect nobody, (but wouldÂ soon be no more, thanks to Me Rocquebrune efforts) had initiated this petitionÂ against those politicians he had hated all his life, those of the pÃ©quiste varietyÂ and who had, in some kind of machiavellian plot, done the unthinkable and inÂ doing so, were about to win the game. This couldnâ t be. This was too much. He,Â Arthur Taitu, being left with all the idiotic and witless characters that were, theseÂ days, crying out loud all their crazy schemes to reconstruct the province their wayÂ and to him, it looked definitely like the course of a mob into the direction of aÂ bottomless pit made out of leftist political lunacy.

Â Â Now, would Me Rocquebrune be able to pull this off? For sure, his lawyer lookedÂ the part. He had the learned and reassuring allure of the intellectual species asÂ Taitu imagined the lot should look. Didnâ t mean anything. Taitu who hadnâ t read

anything in his life except the Almanach and the baseball book of records. ButÂ Rocquebrune knew his way around and he had obtained the collaboration of oneÂ constitutional professor from McGill University. So he must have had hisÂ conclusions right as he was now reciting them, Chinese to Arthurâ s ears.

Â Â There was a lot of â quash left and rightâ and â annul here and thereâ and â declareÂ null and void this and thatâ . But when all was said and done, Arthur Taitu hadÂ been told that what he was asking the court to do was to tell them all politiciansÂ to f.k themselves with their dirty shenanigans. To take their little laws andÂ shove them up their asses. And to leave him in peace. Yup. Leave him in peace.Â In the Canada he liked and who had, up to now, protected him, his property andÂ his animals from the thieving separatists.

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